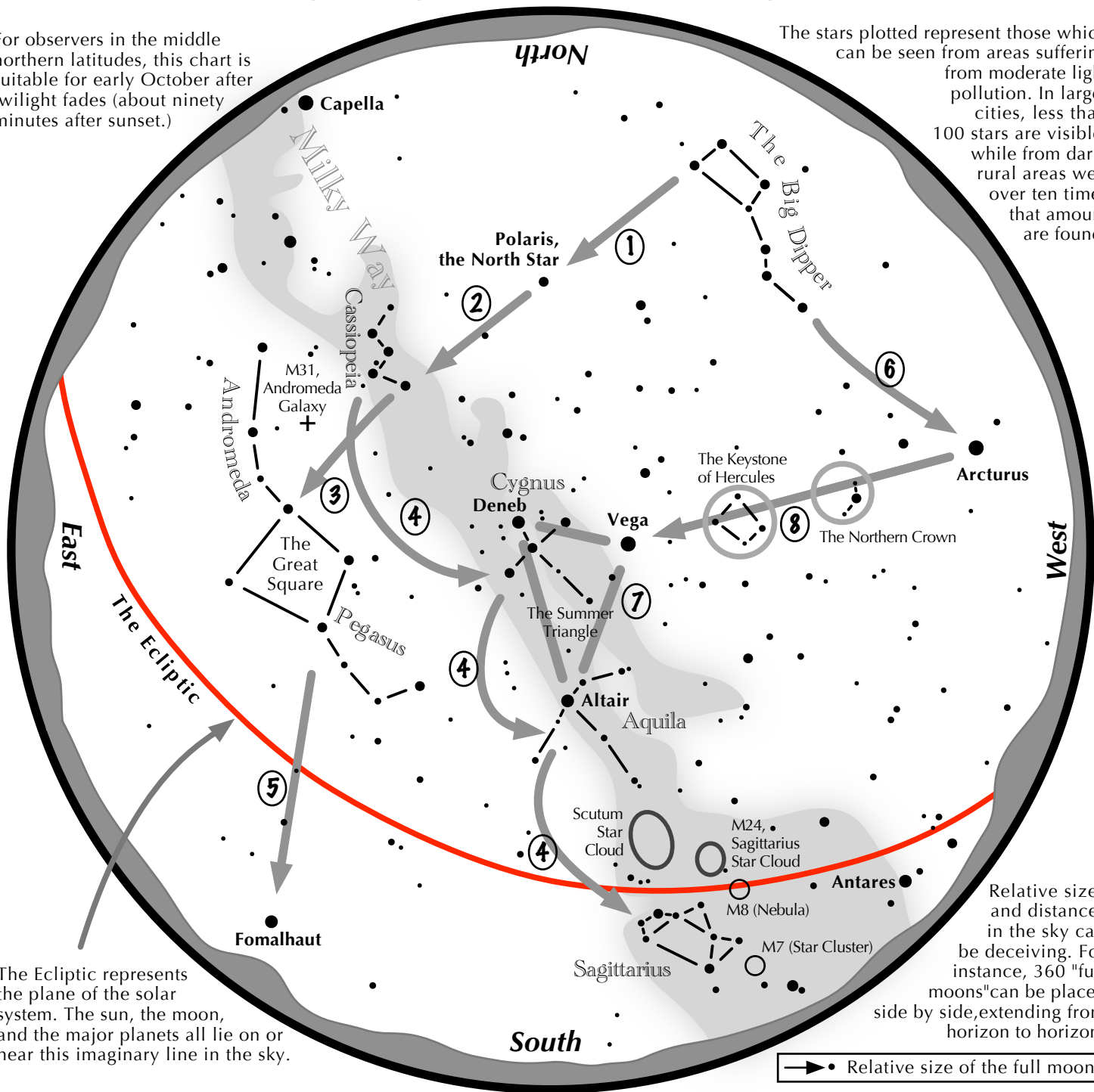


Navigating the Autumn Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early October after twilight fades (about ninety minutes after sunset.)

The stars plotted represent those which can be seen from areas suffering from moderate light pollution. In larger cities, less than 100 stars are visible, while from dark, rural areas well over ten times that amount are found.



The Ecliptic represents the plane of the solar system. The sun, the moon, and the major planets all lie on or near this imaginary line in the sky.

Relative sizes and distances in the sky can be deceiving. For instance, 360 "full moons" can be placed side by side, extending from horizon to horizon.

→• Relative size of the full moon.

Navigating the fall night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

- 1** Extend an imaginary line northward from the two stars at the tip of the Big Dipper's bowl. It passes by Polaris, the North Star.
- 2** Follow that same line to the westernmost star of the "W" of the constellation Cassiopeia lying in the Milky Way.
- 3** Continue the line even farther until it bumps into the star on the upper left corner of the Great Square of Pegasus.
- 4** From Cassiopeia, travel southwards along the softly glowing band of the Milky Way past Cygnus (aka the Northern Cross), past Altair, and end at the teapot-shaped Sagittarius. Look for the bright regions of the Scutum and Sagittarius Star Clouds.
- 5** Use the two westernmost stars of the Great Square to form a line leading south. It strikes the lone bright star Fomalhaut.
- 6** Follow the arc of the Big Dipper's handle. It intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the fall night sky.
- 7** The bright stars Deneb in Cygnus, Altair in Aquila, and Vega shining nearly overhead form the "Summer Triangle."
- 8** Draw a line from Arcturus to Vega. One-third of the way sits "The Northern Crown." Two-thirds of the way hides the "Keystone of Hercules." A dark sky is needed to see these two interesting but dim stellar configurations.

